

The METEOR

The Newsletter of the Greenbelt Astronomy Club
Volume 9 Issue 106 - March 2002

Meteor is the official publication of the Greenbelt Astronomy Club and is distributed monthly as a privilege of membership. Articles and other contributions are welcome. Membership in the Greenbelt Astronomy Club is open to anyone interested in astronomy. The club meets on the last non-holiday Thursday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the H.B. Owens Science Center. The Editor's name and address are: Valerie OBrien; 1-G Northway Road; Greenbelt, MD 20770. The editor's email address is: obrien@bhnrc.arsusda.gov.

The URL for the club's site on the World Wide Web is:
<http://lhea-www.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/outreach/gac/GAC.html>

Upcoming club events:

STAR PARTY DATES FOR GREENBELT ASTRONOMY CLUB 2002 : 2/9, 2/16, 3/9, 3/16, 4/6, 4/13, 5/4, 5/11, 6/8, 6/15, 7/6, 7/13, 8/10, 8/31, 9/7, 9/28, 10/5, 10/12, 11/2, 11/9, 11/30, 12/7, 12/28

Meeting Dates for Club Members:

- 1/31, 2/28, 3/21, 4/25, 5/30, 6/27, 7/25, 8/22, 9/26, 10/24, 11/21, 12/19

Meeting Dates for Board of Directors (all members are welcome):

- 1/17, 2/21, 3/14, 4/18, 5/16, 6/20, 7/18, 8/15, 9/19, 10/17, 11/14, 12/12

Other events:

The Goddard trips to Caroline Furnace are scheduled for the weekends of April 12-14 and October 4-6, 2002. Contact Keith Evans with the Goddard Club at evans@umbc.edu for details.

Announcements :

Elected Officers for 2002:

Ray Stevens is the Astronomical League Co-ordinator.

The meeting was held in the Greenbelt Community Center, Seniors Classroom. There were 21 attendees.

The meeting was called to order by Club Acting President, Doug Love who dispensed with the reading of the February 21 meeting minutes.

Announcements :

- Please submit your contributions for the Observatory Project now. We plan to collect the matching funds from the Meads soon.
- The Goddard trips to Caroline Furnace are scheduled for the weekends of April 12-14 and October 4-6, 2002. Contact Keith Evans with the Goddard Club at evans@umbc.edu for details.

Business Item: Newly Elected Officers on the Board of Directors

- Unanimously, the newly elected officers for 2002 are as follows:

President, William McHale

Vice-President, Tom Teutsch

Treasurer, Doug Love

Secretary, Valerie OBrien

- Astronomy Day Co-Chairs: Tom Bridgman, Joel Miller
- Astronomical League Co-ordinator: Ray Stevens

Business Item : Membership Dues

- Please remember to pay your membership dues of \$15.00 by bringing them to the next meeting or mailing them to : Greenbelt Astronomy Club, P.O. Box 727, Greenbelt, MD 20768. Make checks payable to the iGreenbelt Astronomy Clubi.

Business Item : The Observatory Project Update

- Wayne Warren is storing the 12.5i telescope donated from Goddard to the club. It is a motor driven equatorial mount reflector with a 6 long wooden tube. Goddard members will have access to the observatory (after it is built).

Main Presentation : Gamma Rays - Star Clusters and Galaxies Presenter : Jerry Bonnell (USRA/GSFC)

- The latest findings from the Compton Gamma-ray Observatory were discussed. Some of the topics discussed were black holes, binary neutron stars, and hyper nova.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

Greenbelt Astronomy Club Board Meeting of March 14, 2002

The members of the Greenbelt Astronomy Club met at 7:30pm on Thursday, March 14, 2002. The meeting was held in Greenbelt Community Center, Seniors Classroom. There were 5 attendees which included Bill McHale, Doug Love, Valerie OBrien, Tom Bridgman and Ray Stevens.

The meeting was called to order by Club President, William McHale who dispensed with the reading of the February 28 meeting minutes.

Announcements :

- The Goddard trips to Caroline Furnace are scheduled for the weekends of April 12-14 and October 4-6, 2002. Contact Keith Evans with the Goddard Club at evans@umbc.edu for details.

Astronomy Day 2002

- Plans are well underway for Astronomy Day. The Co-chairs are Tom Bridgman and Joel Miller. Please contact Tom to volunteer: bridgman@wyeth.gsfc.nasa.gov.
- The event will take place on Sat. April 20, 2002 from 6:00-10:00pm at the H.B. Owens Science Center, 9601 Greenbelt Road, Lanham, MD, 20706 (301)918-8750, next to DuVal High School.

Business Item : Membership Dues

- Please remember to pay your membership dues of \$15.00 by bringing them to the next meeting or mailing them to : Greenbelt Astronomy Club, P.O. Box 727, Greenbelt, MD 20768. Make checks payable to the iGreenbelt Astronomy Clubi.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 pm.

Greenbelt Astronomy Club Board Meeting of March 21, 2002

The members of the Greenbelt Astronomy Club met at 7:30pm on Thursday, March 14, 2002. The meeting was held in the H.B. Owens Science Center. There were 16 attendees. The meeting was called to order by Club President, William McHale who dispensed with the reading of the March 14 meeting minutes.

Announcements:

- The Goddard trips to Caroline Furnace are scheduled for the weekends of April 12-14 and October 4-6, 2002. Contact Keith Evans with the Goddard Club at evans@umbc.edu for details.
- Jeff Geurber gave an update of the comet Ikeya-Zhang and its placement in the sky. It is at an approximate magnitude of 3.0, visible to the naked eye and the tail clearly seen with just binoculars.

Comet Update: Jeff Geurber

- A member of the Goddard Astronomy Club, Jeff Geurber, gave an update of the comet Ikeya-Zhang and its placement in the sky. It has an approximate magnitude of 3.0, visible to the naked eye and the tail is clearly seen with binoculars.

Business Item: Membership Dues

- Please remember to pay your membership dues of \$15.00 by bringing them to the next meeting or mailing them to: Greenbelt Astronomy Club, P.O. Box 727, Greenbelt, MD 20768. Make checks payable to the "Greenbelt Astronomy Club".

Treasurers Report: Doug Love stated that the club had \$963.87 in the operations account and \$11,977.97 in the capital account. As of March 19, 2002.

Astronomy Day 2002

- Plans are well underway for Astronomy Day. The Co-chairs are Tom Bridgman and Joel Miller. Please contact Tom to volunteer: bridgman@wyeth.gsfc.nasa.gov.
- The event will take place on Sat. April 20, 2002 from 6:00 10:00pm at the H.B. Owens Science Center, 9601 Greenbelt Road, Lanham, MD, 20706 (301)918-8750, next to DuVal High School.
- George Gliba and Lynne Gilliland are making a generous donation of a handmade telescope to be raffled at this years Astronomy Day event.

Business Item: The Observatory Project Update

- The club is expecting the generous matching donation from the Meads for \$10,000.

Main Presentation: Apparitions of the Inner Planets - Presenter: Russ Waugh, Planetarium Specialist, H. B. Owens Science Center

- The speaker gave an interesting presentation on the planetary orbits, highlighting the elongations, configurations, and transits of Mercury, Venus, and Earth. The planetarium projector was used to illustrate these concepts with the aid of computer simulations.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

[illegible]

Are We There Yet?

Ed Abel

"Where are we going?" and "Dad, are we there yet?"

Do you sometimes just pick up and go? Or, are you like me and most often plan all the details of your trips? I have found that sometimes not having a detailed plan brings a lot more fun and excitement: you don't control what's going to happen, it just does!

Believe me, I don't know where these thoughts are leading, but I have in the back of my mind both our rebuilding the club's 17.5" mirrored scope and an evening under the stars.

First the scope: based on faith in Bill the designer and creator (little "C"), John and I are taking a building trip (**ALL** are welcome!). Oh sure, we've been given some preliminary maps of the destination ("A truss tube Dobsonian which is light enough so that a single person can carry it" (and a Married one too?) and which will "glide as smooth as butter"). Based on these drawings, as well as our deep faith, we make progress: cut some steel, drill and tap it, weld it; now measure! Cut some wood, sand and stain it, glue it; now measure! The pieces are beginning to look a lot like beautiful parts to something (they do **look** great!)- The mirror box with its rocking chair-like rockers, however, looks more like a really expensive rocking horse for my three year old niece (though it would support her even at 700 pounds!). "Faith my son; all will be revealed." And so we go, enjoying the trip without detailed plans.

And the sky: I must admit that when I go to a star party, I most often spend at least three hours that day planning what will be in that evening's sky for me (as if I could control it!). However, I've found that when I give up my control, just go and look at what's out there, I much more enjoy what I see. I am excited about what may be "around the next bend" or turn of the scope. I can better hear others' descriptions. There are more "Wows!" and "Do you see THAT!" as I take some time to really look rather than quickly pursuing "what's next on the list". Chasing the planned target is rewarding also. Don't get me wrong; I'll still plan. It's just different for me **discovering** what will be revealed. And so we go at times, enjoying the trip without detailed plans.

I guess then that the answer to "Dad, are we there yet?" may be "Yes" then. In a larger sense, with faith the trip itself is the destination.

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Astronomy made Halloween, 2001, really special. A full moon is always impressive and its occurrence on a normally 'spooky' holiday provided a great opportunity to talk up the GAC and get to know the neighbors. As darkness fell, I hauled the 6" dob to the end of the parking lot in 6 Court. A moon filter, a couple of eyepieces, a chair and a table with candy for the kids completed the set up. The moon wasn't up yet, so I told the early birds to come back - several did. Once the moon peeked over the garage roof, enthusiasm swelled. 'Want to look at the moon through a telescope?' was a question that didn't have a negative answer. 'Wow!' was the uniform response. Some of the youngsters got so excited that I had to remind them to get some candy. Since then a young couple who bought one of the houses on 6 Court has told me that that experience influenced their decision to move to my neighborhood.

A couple of months later came one of those particularly clear nights that demands an observing session, even when I'm tired and will have to get up the next morning to go to work. Once again, out came the dob in the parking lot. Saturn at 120x with a yellow filter was spectacular - much too good to keep to myself. Everybody I saw got invited over. 'Come look at Saturn' turned out to be as irresistible as the moon on Halloween. The Cassini division was crisp and black. Some structure on the planet was also visible. Even the neighbor who doesn't like my cats came over and admired the view!